

Chesky Records Review

CHESKY RECORDS

fine music
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top talent

New York Blue
Valerie Joyce
Chesky JD316
★★★★★

The trouble with jazz singing is that so many can't agree on what it is. Those who love the vocal gymnastics of some singers with their improvised 'scatter gun' approach dismiss with a sneer those whose emphasis is on the expressive beauty of a ballad. It's why Dianna Krall's lovely string albums have been dismissed in some quarters and why Stacey Kent, one of the finest interpreters of the great standards, remains relatively unknown in Australia today - except for those who know. Yet on hearing Krall, Kent and Tierney Sutton for the first time, you soon realise they have something very special - a distinctive sound and presence. And so it is with Valerie Joyce, a new name to me, but a great talent. In an era when young twenty-something singers are being hailed as the next big thing or the new Norah Jones, it is refreshing to hear one who is not only a class act, but is headed for the top. Listening to the Japanese-American singer's subtly crafted ballad interpretations it is evident she has an affinity with the material. As she says: 'I am inspired by the great classic songwriters... being able to record these songs with amazing musicians was a magical, unforgettable experience.' With her distinctive, smoky *vibrato* she gently unfolds the lyrics of venerable gems from The Great American Songbook by Rodgers and Hart (*It Never Entered My Mind* and *It's Easy To Remember*), Cole Porter (*Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye*), Alec Wilder (*Moon And Sand*), and Jimmy Van Heusen and Johnny Burke (*Dam That Dream*) as well as breathing new life into such pop fare as Jimmy Hendrix's *Little Wing* and John Lennon/Paul McCartney's *Golden Slumbers*. And she is one of the few singers who can reprise *Fever* without me thinking of Peggy Lee. But if there is one song that is made for her whispered elegance, it's Sammy Cahn and Jule Styne's *I Fall In Love Too Easily* - for me the outstanding track. She is well served by her backing musicians especially saxophonist Lawrence Feldman who solos with consummate taste on both alto and tenor. Listening to her recalls memories of another era when songs were not only always melodic but well sung. A very special talent indeed! - *Kevin Jones*